AJK Council adopts Rs1.82bn budget for '98-99

By Our Correspondent

MUZAFFARABAD, Dec 31: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council (AJKC) adopted on Wednesday the Rs1.82 billion budget for 1998-99 in its second session held here on Thursday with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the chair.

The AJKC budget was presented by the federal minister for Kashmir and Northern Areas affairs, Lt-Gen Abdul Majid Malik, in the first sitting of the council's session in Islamabad on Oct 3.

The net collection is distributed between the AJK government and the Council secretariat at a ratio of 80:20 in accordance with the "Distribution of Revenue and Grant-in-Aid Order, 1975," of the Pakistan government.

This 20 per cent becomes the part of the consolidated fund of the AJK Council secretariat and is used for the developmental programme in Azad Kashmir and in those areas of Pakistan where Kashmiri refugees are settled and on the administrative expenses of the secretariat.

According to an official handout, the AJKC exceeded the income tax collection target of Rs1,500 million for 1997-98 by Rs64 million, collecting a record amount of Rs1,564 million in its history. Similarly, Rs486 million was collected on account of excise and sales tax against the target of Rs241 million in 1997-98. This amount goes directly to the AJK government.

The income tax collection target in 1998-99 has been fixed at Rs1,655 million. According to the proposed allocations, Rs339.820 million (19 per cent of the total budget) has been earmarked for developmental projects and Rs190.580 million (10 per cent) for non-developmental activities.

A sum of Rs1,289.600 million would go to the Azad Kashmir government as its share. Of the Rs339.820 million, Rs40 million has been allocated for the chairman of the AJKC, Rs15 million for the vice-chairman, Rs10 million each for the six elected members of the council.

These amounts would be spent on special developmental programmes/schemes on their recommendation. Furthermore, Rs20 million has been earmarked for the provision of two bulldozers for Bhimbher and Sudhnoti districts.

The AJK Council also adopted two bills, namely, "The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council (Adaptation and Validation) Act, 1998," and "The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Income Tax (Adaptation and Validation) Act, 1998."

RESOLUTIONS: The meeting also adopted some resolutions, unanimously, tabled by Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz, advisers to the AJKC Raja Zulqarnain Khan and Chaudhry Mohammad Yaqub.

A resolution condemned the brutal use of force by the Indian occupied forces which has claimed the lives of over 60,000 Kashmiris and unlawful detention of tens of thousands of political activists.

The session also condemned the genocide, massacre, extra-judicial and custodial killings, burning of houses villages and desecration of holy places committed by the Indian forces in the held territory during the last eight years.

It supported the efforts of the government of Pakistan for a peaceful solution to the Kashmir dispute based on the wishes of its people through all possible means, including a substantive and meaningful dialogue with India. It urged the international community to address the real cause of insecurity, conflicts and tensions in South Asia.

Another resolution condemned the indiscriminate firing by the Indian forces at the civilian population along the line of control inside Azad Kashmir which has resulted in a large number of casualties. Calling for an immediate end to the violations along the line of control, the resolution asked India to allow UNMOGIP to discharge its function of monitoring the LoC on both sides and in this regard urged the UN to increase the number of military observers deployed by the UNMOGIP.

Through another resolution, the AJKC condemned India for nuclearizing the South Asia and said Indian nuclear blackmail would not deter the Kashmiris in their just struggle for right to self-determination.